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Statement by Austria
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AGENDA ITEM 12

General Exchange of Views on the Legal Aspects of Space Traffic Management

02 June 2021

Madame Chair, Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The utilization of outer space has become indispensable for our daily lives. At the same time, the increase in space activities, the progressive congestion of the outer space environment as well as the multiplication and diversification of actors in the space arena are increasingly becoming a challenge for the safe and sustainable conduct of space activities.

In our view, it is necessary to ensure the safety and sustainability of the utilisation of outer space for all peaceful uses in future. This is all the more urgent against the background of new initiatives, such as large satellite constellations. We therefore believe that deliberations in this Subcommittee on the topic of space traffic management are of great importance and relevance.

Existing international space law already contains provisions that are of relevance for the management of space traffic. This includes principles set forth in the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, such as the principle of non-appropriation of outer space and the principle of the use of outer space for peaceful purposes only.

Moreover, the regimes on liability and registration contained in the respective Conventions of 1972 and 1975 are also relevant in the context of space traffic management. Of importance in this regard are also the international regulations of the ITU regarding the allocation of radio frequencies and satellite orbits, which are essential to allow a conduct of space activities free from harmful interference.

A number of issues related to space traffic management have been covered by non-binding international instruments, such as the UNCOUOS Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines or the

2007 UNGA Resolution 62/101 on enhancing the practice of states and international intergovernmental organizations in registering space objects. The agreement on 21 Guidelines on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities is also a positive development in this regard.

However, for an effective management of space traffic gaps in the international regulatory frameworks will have to be filled. A multilateral, comprehensive approach is essential to enhance the safety and sustainability of the use of outer space. A comprehensive international system of space traffic management should take into account new activities and developments in the space arena and ensure that various initiatives relevant for the management of space traffic are encompassed.

In developing an international space traffic management framework the following elements should - in our view – be taken into account:

- Increased information sharing requirements, particularly through Space Situational Awareness programs;
- Incentives for international cooperation and capacity building;
- Common operating rules and safety standards;
- Notification mechanisms, especially for launches, orbital manoeuvres and re-entries;
- "Right of way" rules;
- Certain safety-related provisions aimed at increasing transparency and trust between states;
- Provisions for the mitigation and disposal of space debris;
- Environmental regulations.

Madame Chair

In concluding, let me underline again, that Austria attaches great importance to the issue of space traffic management and will continue to engage in the discussions and also to support efforts in this regard within the framework of COPUOS and its Subcommittees.

Thank You!